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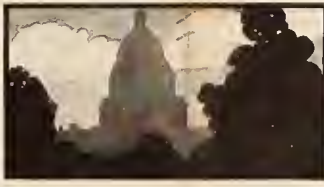
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## THE HOME LIFE OF LINCOLN

### Personal Recollections of Colonel W. H. Crook

BODYGUARD OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN



DECORATIONS BY JAMES M. PRESTON

IT IS my purpose in this article, and in other articles following, to give a series of pictures of the home life of the White House during various Administrations, commencing with that of President Lincoln.

Countless articles have been written, and many books, concerning the official side of the White House. I may add that I have kept sufficient notes during the last forty-five years to enable me to be sure of my statements; and though certain of them may be disputed here or there, yet the reader may rest assured that I know whereof I speak.

Moses had been raised up to lead the people of Israel through their trials and tribulations until he brought them to the threshold of the Promised Land.

I shall never forget that afternoon of Thursday, January 5, 1865. . . . Pursuant to orders I went directly from my home to the White House.

walked up the stairs to the President's office, and exactly at eight o'clock told the doorkeeper that I was ordered to report to the President personally. The doorkeeper at once threw open the door and I stepped modestly into the office, where for the first time I saw Abraham Lincoln. The President was seated on the farther side of the room on a revolving chair in front of his old-fashioned desk, going over some papers. As I appeared quietly he looked up from his desk and I said:

"Mr. President, my name is W. H. Crook. I have been ordered to report to you for duty as your personal bodyguard."

The President merely responded:

"All right, Crook; all right, Crook."

Then he turned to his papers again and I left the office and went downstairs to the White House, where I was ordered to report to the President and his official family to all of the public who wished to attend.

On reaching the ground floor of the White House, after leaving the President's office, I was immediately shown to my position for the evening by Mr. Thomas F. Pendel, the doorkeeper who had charge of such arrangements. His orders were for me to stand near the President during the entire reception, where I could see every person who came up to him to greet him. At that time the public attending a levee came into the White House through the main entrance on the north front. It was understood, of course, that wraps of all kinds and overcoats and shawls must be taken off in the cloakroom, and for a very good reason. The fact must never be lost sight of that these were war times. The whole country was in tumult—at any moment an attempt might be made to assassinate the President, and no precaution could be overlooked.

#### Orders to Watch Over the President's Safety

AFTER having served in the Union Army I had been a member of the police force of Washington for about two years, and was off duty, resting in my home near First and M Streets, N. W., on Thursday, January 5, 1865, when about the middle of that day a fellow-member of the Washington police force arrived and notified me that I had been ordered to report at eight o'clock that night to the President as his personal bodyguard. Up to that time I had never seen President Lincoln nor any other President, and naturally I was a good deal surprised at this notification, for it meant many things. Among others it meant that I had been chosen to stand between Abraham Lincoln and danger of all kinds—including possible assassination—and this was what gave me a sense of the deepest satisfaction, for it showed that my superior officers on the police force had picked me out as a man who could be trusted—and no greater compliment could possibly have been paid me. I was then twenty-six years old, of medium height, wiry, lithe and powerful, having lived most of my life in the open air. I enjoyed perfect health, never knowing what nerves meant. I had clear eyesight, keen sense of hearing, and was ready to go anywhere or do anything at a moment's notice.

As soon as the officer had delivered his message I went into the house and told my wife. She at once took the grave responsibilities that had been placed on me and was greatly disturbed, not because of any danger or peril to myself—she knew me well enough to know that I could take care of myself under almost any conceivable circumstances—but because it almost overwhelmed her to think that, in that time of terrible civil war, upon my shoulders, upon my judgment, upon my quickness of thought and carefulness had been placed the safety, perhaps the life, of the man who had been raised up by the Lord God Almighty to preserve the Union as surely as

#### The First Night's Duty at the White House

PRECISELY at nine o'clock the President and Mrs. Lincoln, accompanied by the Cabinet officers and their wives, left the living-rooms of the President's household and descended to the main floor by way of the private stairway at the west end of the White House. The Marine Band was stationed in an open space near the official staircase at the left side of the main entrance. Those attending the reception passed through this main entrance and, after leaving coats and wraps in the cloakroom, passed around into the Red Room, where many of them gathered and waited until the doors leading into the Blue Room should be thrown open, for it was in the Blue Room, just beyond these doors, that the President and his official family stood and received their guests. I stood in the Red Room in front of these closed doors for a short time, watching the throng gather there, and was almost dazzled by the spectacle. In the first place, the elegance of the room itself was something to which I had never been accustomed, with all its exquisite furnishing and brilliant lighting; and naturally, those formed in line nearest the closed doors were members of the Diplomatic Corps, in all their gorgeous uniforms and brilliant decorations, accompanied by the ladies of their families, who were clad in Parisian frocks of the utmost elegance, and who were such an

abundance of jewels as I had read of, but had never seen or ever expected to see. No wonder that I, a young man of twenty-six who had spent almost all of my life in a little Maryland village, was temporarily dazzled by those gentlemen and ladies and by the officers of the Army and Navy who immediately followed them, these also being in full-dress uniform, and for the most part accompanied by ladies likewise most beautifully dressed!

My moment of bewilderment was brief; for near the hour of nine the doors were thrown open and in the Blue Room, a few feet beyond the threshold, stood Ward H. Lamman, Marshal of the District of Columbia; just beyond him was President Lincoln, with Mrs. Lincoln by his side, and next to her the wives of the Cabinet officers in the receiving line. I at once took my position just inside the Blue Room directly opposite the President, and turned so as to face every person who came up to the threshold of that door—for my business was to see that no suspicious character should come within reach of President Lincoln, and that no person, even though well known, should cross that doorway with hands concealed or covered in any manner whatsoever. It should be remembered that in guarding a President or any other man the first consideration is to watch the hands of those who might do harm. Empty hands can never accomplish assassination.

As each couple reached Marshal Lamman he introduced them to the President, who, turning slightly, introduced them to his wife; and then they passed down the receiving line bowing to each of the ladies there. It was all very simple, very dignified, and if I may use the term, very American. President Lincoln smiled and grasped the hand of each man presented with a heartiness and cordiality that admitted of no doubt as to his sincerity. There he stood, tall, lean and broad of shoulder, with a noble countenance; and for the time being the lines of care had left his face, and his eyes were lighted with the cordiality of a host who is really glad to meet his guests. And Mrs. Lincoln, standing next to him, her head barely reaching to his shoulder, was equally cordial, equally gracious as she greeted those who were presented.

#### The Reception Guests

I SHALL never forget the picture presented as I first saw that evening. She wore a low-neck dress with the hoop-skirts which seem so funny to the young people of the present generation; around her beautiful throat was a necklace of filigree work, and encircling her head a wreath of white roses such as she invariably wore on such occasions—a smiling, cordial little lady, graceful although so plump, bowing to each of the men and women as the President introduced them, and evidently enjoying every moment as the evening passed. As the guests reached the end of the receiving line they strolled around the farther end of the Blue Room, where were scattered members of the Cabinet and others high in official life, friends and acquaintances greeting each other and gathering in groups for a few minutes, then drifting on naturally into the Green Room and from there into the spacious and magnificent East Room. All the time that the people were going in and giving their names to Marshal Lamman, and passing the President and Mrs. Lincoln, and the ladies of the Cabinet, I remained standing opposite Lincoln, alert in every nerve of my being, and with my eyes searching every man and woman as they approached the Marshal. To those accustomed to the formality of receptions during recent Administrations, that levee away back in 1865 would have been an amusing contrast. All the conditions of people, from every section of the country, came up to be presented. Of the private citizens some were in full evening dress, of course, and among them were men and women occupying high positions in finance, commerce, professional life and in society; but also in that long stream, slowly winding its way to where the President stood, were men and women from the country districts and backwoods, and from farms in New England and the Middle States, and from what we now call the Middle West. It did not seem strange to me then, although I cannot help smiling now as I recall the scene, that many of those humble folk whom Lincoln thought so much of, whom he loved so well and in whom he placed implicit faith as the true backbone of the nation—it did not then seem strange that many of the women wore dresses and bonnets most unfashionably made, and of anything but expensive material. Among them were hearty, sturdy farmers' wives, arrayed in their best Sunday-go-to-meeting frocks, some of whom wore mitts,

others who wore gloves fitting none too well; and many a woman put forth a hand hardened by toil and worn in the service of husbands and sons who were then at the front. You may very well believe that no hands were grasped by the great President and his wife more cordially than these. Once in a while a young daughter would accompany her father and mother, but it made no difference whether she were a debutante from Philadelphia, Boston, New York, or a tired schoolma'am from some little red schoolhouse, or a hard-working farmer's daughter—the President and Mrs. Lincoln were glad to see her. And then a few came along in that slow-moving line to whom the President seemed especially grateful for what he considered the honor of their presence; and these few, scattered here and there, were old women—some with bowed shoulders and white hair, dim of vision, feeble of step, whose sons and grandsons were somewhere south of the Potomac carrying muskets, or wandering in the swamps, or suffering with wounds in hospitals, or undergoing the terrible misery inseparable from some of the military prisons in the South. Such women I have mentioned particularly, were usually accompanied by husbands or brothers, vastly different in appearance from the well-fed, well-dressed men of the great cities who formed a majority of those present.

I wonder what would happen now at a Presidential reception if a dozen or twenty or thirty men should enter the White House, as a matter of course, wearing negligé

that within such a garment it was possible to conceal almost an arsenal of weapons. When she reached the place where I was standing I stopped her and said:

"Madam, you cannot take those weapons in with you."

She was then within five feet of the President, and Marshal Lamman was ready to introduce her. She looked at me in surprise and said:

"Do you know who I am?"

I replied: "No, Madam, I do not."

She said: "I am Mrs. Kate Chase Sprague."

I said: "I can't help it, Madam; whoever you are, you cannot come in and see the President with your wraps on."

For a moment she hesitated; but, of course, I stood in front of her, and then she turned and went back to the cloakroom, and when she reappeared it was without this seakink coat, and I could see she carried nothing in her hands.

When the last of the several hundred people present had been introduced by Marshal Lamman, the President and Mrs. Lincoln quietly withdrew and went upstairs to their living-rooms. As he turned to go, the President told me to wait for him downstairs as he wished to visit the War Department. It was then after eleven o'clock and at about eleven-thirty, the guests having all departed from the White House, the President came downstairs again and I accompanied him through the basement of the White House and thence over to the War Department, where, as usual, he made his headquarters. He remained in the War Department until about midnight, when he was called to his nightly call on Secretary Stanton to get the latest news from the front. Before long we returned to the White House and the President retired, I remaining on duty in the hallway outside of the room where he was sleeping, until relieved at eight o'clock in the morning.

Thus ended my first experience as bodyguard to Abraham Lincoln.

#### A Typical Day

THE daily life of Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln usually commenced at eight o'clock. Immediately upon dressing the President would go into the library, where he would sit in his favorite chair in the middle of the room and read a chapter or two in his Bible. I think I am safe in saying that this was President Lincoln's inviolable custom—at least it was such during the time I was on duty with him. At about eight-thirty he would join Mrs. Lincoln and little Tad for breakfast in the small, unpretentious dining-room, where a plain but sufficient hearty meal was served by two waiters, who were white men and who were paid personally by the President, who also paid the wages of his cook and his coachman and footman.

There was little of formality about the meal, the President loving to joke with his wife and son, and for the time being laying aside his anxiety for the country. As soon as breakfast was over the President would go to his office and begin his ceaseless toil.

Mrs. Lincoln was not merely an excellent housekeeper but a practical one, and she busied herself about the White House—then called the Executive Mansion—much as any other housekeeper would busy herself about her private home.

She would go from room to room, seeing that the work was satisfactorily done, looking after innumerable small details, especially those which had to do with the comfort of her husband and her little son. Then, as a general thing, Mrs. Lincoln would attend to her personal correspondence in her own boudoir, where she had a desk. Afterward, like as not, she would go down to the old conservatory, long since removed, which was a favorite resort for her. She loved flowers and understood them and knew their needs; and she was able to give the one gardener exact directions as to what she wanted done and also how to do it.

Because of her love of flowers and her knowledge of plant life, the old conservatory during President Lincoln's time was a model of its kind.

If, at any time during the day, Mrs. Lincoln happened to think of something she wished to tell her husband, she did not hesitate to go into his office as she would have gone unhesitatingly into his law office in Springfield. For, first of all, Abraham Lincoln was her husband, and he was his helper and comrade, and the fact that he was a world figure, occupied with some of the gravest problems that have ever confronted a man, did not overwhelm and blot out the fact that he was her husband. I do not wish to be misunderstood by any who might think that Mrs. Lincoln would intrude upon her husband while he was deeply engaged in his office, for she was very careful never thus to interrupt any of the countless conferences with officials of the Government, or with representatives of



shirts, slouch hats, and cowhide boots into the tops of which were thrust their trousers! It is a literal fact, however, that not a few of the men presented to President and Mrs. Lincoln at their levee on January 5, 1865, came up to the door of the Blue Room wearing such heavy, clumsy boots. They thought nothing of it. Neither did Mrs. Lincoln, and least of all the President. To Lincoln, clothes meant nothing—manhood, truth, honor, hard work meant everything.

As may be imagined, under the circumstances, I was nervous and anxious that night when, for the first time, I was called upon to guard the safety and life of Lincoln. Occasionally I glanced at the President, who stood but a few feet from me; but for practically every second of that entire evening I kept my eyes on one couple after another as they came forward, noting man after man and woman after woman, first seeing that their hands were in plain view, and that they held nothing upon them that was a handkerchief; but even then being sure that no weapon of any kind was concealed beneath a fan or within a handkerchief. It so happened that only one person appeared, that evening, wearing a cloak. This was a woman who stepped forward with an assurance of manner proclaiming her to be accustomed to such levees. There was no hesitation about her manner, as was the case with most of those present, but as soon as I saw her I noticed that in addition to wearing a hat she also wore a long, loose seakink coat, reaching almost to her ankles; and I knew



foreign Governments, or with humble citizens in private life who constantly called upon President Lincoln. She was careful, as became a woman of intelligence and common-sense, not to interfere; but when the President was not occupied with such matters she would come into his office and ask him a question about some matter of common interest, to find out if he had some engagement for that afternoon or evening, whether he could go to the theater or take a drive, or to speak with him about something or other that little Tad wished to do. Looking at their lives in this aspect it was all very beautiful and homelike.

A great many people have had the idea that Mrs. Lincoln did not realize at the time the gravity of her husband's position, and what an extraordinary influence he wielded in the world; and certainly many of them sometimes thought that she was not so solicitous for his comfort and his happiness as she might have been. But I wish to go on record as saying that during the time I was on duty Mrs. Lincoln looked after her husband's welfare with the utmost consideration. She was of a cheerful, lively temperament; she had a sense of humor that enabled her to appreciate the President's droll stories and homely wit; and certainly in this regard she aided him to ease what was an almost insupportable burden during the darkest days of the war. People have thought Mrs. Lincoln frivolous and thoughtless. She was not. She knew, for example, what the President liked to eat and what was good for him to eat, and she saw that he had it. When the weather was cold she made it her business to see that the President did not go outdoors unless he had about his shoulders a warm gray shawl to protect him.

#### Mr. Lincoln's Fondness for Apples

OF COURSE, there must be two sides to the life of any President—one, that of public life and affairs, concerning which the world knows more or less; on this side of his life Mrs. Lincoln did not attempt to exert an influence, such as history records on the part of many women in the courts of Europe during days gone by. Mr. Lincoln ate heartily, but not to excess, although he was particularly fond of certain things, especially apples, and Mrs. Lincoln always had a sufficiency of this fruit chosen carefully and ready at hand. The President never used tobacco, so far as I know, and I never knew him to drink wine or other alcoholic beverages, not even at the state dinners where, of course, wines were provided for those who wished them. I am quite sure that neither he nor Mrs. Lincoln worried about the possibility of assassination. Certainly, if Mrs. Lincoln was worried she did not show it, and the President exercised the calm philosophy of a stoic in this particular. Mrs. Lincoln occasionally had old friends from Illinois and elsewhere visiting her in the White House, but there



was very little of social gaiety there as compared with that obtaining under later Administrations and under the Administrations of earlier Presidents, when, for instance, Bolly Madison entertained so brilliantly.

Again I remind my readers of the fact that, during Lincoln's Administration, the country was torn apart with the most terrible warfare; death was on every hand, the black badge of mourning was seen on every side, and those connected with the White House, where centered the entire nervous system of the nation, felt the strain of conflict, the grief and sorrow, so poignantly and so constantly that it is no wonder gaiety and lightness of spirit were for the most part absent. Then again, the President's second son, Willie Lincoln, had died only two years before, and both President and Mrs. Lincoln unquestionably felt this loss while I was acting as Mr. Lincoln's bodyguard. Robert Lincoln, the eldest of the three sons, was a young man, a captain serving on Grant's staff, who came only occasionally to the White House.

During the latter part of the President's life, and long after his death, a great many persons held an entirely incorrect opinion concerning Mrs. Lincoln's character as it related to her family and her every-day routine. She was a woman of simple domestic inclinations; her mission in life lay in being the wife and mother that she unquestionably showed herself to be.

From some cause little Tad's speech was interfered with by an unusual impediment, which made it extremely difficult for him to pronounce certain words and really impossible to enunciate clearly a name like Smith, for instance. Perhaps it was partly owing to this that he did not attend a school while living in the White House. At any rate, he had a tutor, a fine, scholarly Scotchman named Williamson, who came every morning to teach the little fellow his lessons. All the rest of the time Tad spent in playing, in reading and in investigating, except when he was with his father—for whenever it was possible Mr. Lincoln had the little fellow with him. I verily believe that this child's presence and feeling had greater influence with the President

than the arguments of the entire Administration. Lincoln lived for one thing, and for one thing only: to help his countrymen as a whole regardless of section, North or South or East or West; to do what was right; to seek and follow the course that would be wisest, kindest, most helpful in the highest sense. Profoundly reverent himself, he accepted as literal fact the statement that the surest way to bring about the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, to bring about conditions of peace, and love, and sympathy between the great forces which had torn his own country apart, was for us all to believe in goodness and truth with the simple, unquestioning faith of the little child. Perhaps it was his logical carrying out of this reasoning that led him to gain renewed strength from constant association with his little son. Certain it was that Abraham Lincoln was wholly wrapped up in the boy.

As I remember him best, Tad was a bright lad of nine or ten years. To some he seemed to be unusually inquisitive; but as I now look back I think this was an inevitable result of his inherited intellect, as well as of his share of his father's strong character. Tad wanted to know all about everything. It didn't matter much what was the subject; to whatever his attention was called, on whatever his fancy alighted, to that he sprang eagerly and instantly, and he wanted to master it in every detail of being, cause and effect. Like the great President, Tad had a heart like a woman's. If he differed from other boys in any one thing, to a marked degree, it was in that fact. Tad Lincoln was never cruel to any living creature. It may have been this fundamental trait in his childish character that formed the basis of that wonderful bond of sympathy and understanding that certainly existed between his father and himself.

#### Little Tad's Team of Goats

I HOPE I am not giving the impression that Tad was a prig, or anything approaching it. Excepting for his tenderness of heart and his endowment with an extraordinary intellect, he differed in no wise from the average bright, energetic American lad. While he lived in the White House the military side of life was uppermost in every one's mind, of course, and naturally Tad was interested in soldiers. To be a soldier was the height of his ambition, and he had a regulation lieutenant's uniform, with epaulettes and all the other accessories thereto, in which he often would dress up and strut around in high feather. Like all children he was very fond of private theatricals, and delighted in acting plays. A room in the White House was fitted up for him as a miniature theater, and there he spent many of the happiest hours of his life. As I look back over nearly half a century I can see him most plainly, and oftenest, seated in a little wagon, driving a pair of goats around the White House grounds. Sometimes the goats would

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trot along as directed, and sometimes they would decline to move, or move in the wrong direction, or try to move in two directions at once, as goats will, neither being in the right direction. But Tad didn't mind much. He would simply wait until the steeds were ready to go where he wanted, and then they would start on.

When I accompanied Mr. Lincoln to Petersburg, during his memorable visit to the front, little Tad went with us, and slept in my stateroom so that I could be sure no harm came to him. I doubt if I ever felt greater responsibility in guarding the President himself than I felt when he placed his boy's hand in mine and said I was to keep him from all danger.

The death of his father almost broke Tad's heart—I say this literally—and not very long afterward he died while in Europe with his mother.

While I saw much less of Robert T. Lincoln than of Tad, yet the older son I remember as a fine, manly fellow, genial to every one, and wholly lacking in snobbishness or self-conceit.

I am sure that all of those who came in close contact with the President and Mrs. Lincoln would agree in saying that they were a happy couple, and that they led a peaceful, quiet, happy life, understanding each other, sympathizing with each other, doing their very best to influence Robert for his own good and to bring up little Tad so that he should lead a life truly successful. I never knew President Lincoln to lose his temper on any occasion, although I have been present when I could only wonder how he could sit still in dignified calmness when some other man, under such conditions, would have risen up in righteous wrath, and when most men would have been provoked to physical violence—this, of course, when some reckless man would meet him face to face and denounce his policies or question his motives. As for the domestic relations between the President and Mrs. Lincoln, I do not recall ever witnessing a discussion between them.

## Lincoln's Treatment of Bored

At that time, it must be remembered, any one who wished to talk with President Lincoln could walk up to his office and, after speaking with the doorman, go in and meet Lincoln. Excepting when engaged with his Cabinet, President Lincoln never denied him, at any time, to any man or woman who came to the White House to see him. When I remember the numbers of people who came there on all conceivable errands, for all imaginable purposes, it seems extraordinary that he could get through with his work and then grant them interviews. But then, Lincoln had a most effective way of dismissing those who trespassed upon his time, for he realized that it belonged not to himself, but to the nation. Let me give an illustration of what I mean.

Some morning an upstate politician would come bustling into the White House and want to see the President, not for any real reason, but just in order that he might go back to his constituents and tell how he was received by the President, and what he said to the President, and what the President said to him, and so on. Lincoln would size up such a man in half a minute and he could get rid of him in about another half-minute; not brusquely, or by waving him aside, or suggesting that he was too busy to be seen at that particular time; on the contrary, before the upstate politician would be a chance to start at the information he had to give, or on his views of the President's policy, Mr. Lincoln would begin to tell a droll story, and when he finished the politician would be laughing so heartily he would forget all about that which he was going to tell the President. Then his hand would be grasped by the President, who would at once turn to his desk, and the politician would find himself leaving the White House more than satisfied with his call—which had lasted two minutes instead of two hours as he had expected.

So great was the pressure on the President's time and thought that he had little chance for pleasure or recreation, except for an occasional drive with Mrs. Lincoln or a horseback ride out to the Soldiers'

the President and Mrs. Lincoln would start homeward as they had come, quietly and reverently. Occasionally little Tad accompanied his father and mother to church, but not very often.

During the time that I was serving as personal bodyguard to Lincoln he and Mrs. Lincoln usually dined at seven o'clock in the evening—a leisurely meal, well cooked, well chosen, with special reference to the President's dislike of elaborate dishes and frills in general. In those days the White House had no regularly-employed housekeeper such as has been necessary for a number of years past, because, owing to the natural evolution of social life and customs in this country, the President's wife is now called upon to do much of her time and strength and thought to entertaining, largely semi-official in nature, which was the period in Lincoln's period. I have no doubt that some of the ladies who have graced the Executive Mansion during the last forty years may have been Mrs. Lincoln's equals as practical housekeepers; but I am sure that none of them was her superior. She had a steward to attend to special duties which would naturally fall to such a person, but she herself directed everything herself. She knew just what kinds of food should be provided, what cuts of various meats were the best, how vegetables should be prepared, how bread should be made. And what is more, her cook and her waiters and her few other servants knew that she knew. In consequence, the domestic relations of the Executive Mansion ran along their way smoothly and serenely and most comfortably.

After dinner, at about eight o'clock, the President would rise from the table and go at once across to the War Department to get news from the front, excepting on Thursday nights, when he would attend the regular weekly levee had been held. If I happened to be on night duty I would accompany him, of course, and while we were absent for an hour or two Mrs. Lincoln, after seeing that Tad was safe and soundly asleep in his bed, would go into the living-room, as the Red Room was then called. Sometimes she would spend the evening in reading the newspapers of various cities until the President returned; but she was not fond of embroidering or other work with the needle. Generally, however, some of the wives of Cabinet officers would drive to the Executive Mansion to spend an informal evening and occasionally these ladies would be accompanied by their husbands, but not always, by any means. For, let me repeat again, those were war times—war with its terrible new methods of defeat, of death, injury, starvation, of discontent with the Administration in many quarters, of apprehension regarding the action of certain foreign Powers.

## Somber Days at the White House

Neither the President nor the men chosen as his Cabinet advisers could call an hour their own in advance of its coming. Day and night, night and day, they were carrying a burden of anxiety and responsibility almost of crushing weight. And as a result the Cabinet members did not often go with their wives for an informal evening in that old living-room. The ladies, however, seemed to enjoy meeting each other there and chatting about a thousand things. In such weather there was a comfortable blaze in the big fireplace, around which they would gather. And while a fine piano stood ready at hand I do not remember having heard any music, other vocal or instrumental, on such occasions. At the time I sometimes wondered why the ladies did not play or sing; but afterward I understood that music with its gayety and lightness, is not born of times of grief and mourning and dread. No, there was no hilarity in the Executive Mansion in those days; all was sadness, for the President and his official family and their wives knew better than any of the public what the country was passing through, and felt accordingly.

I will amend that slightly. There was no hilarity excepting where Tad was concerned. Time and time again I have seen Tad sitting on his father's shoulders, his little legs securely twined about his father's neck, while Lincoln's Lincoln galloped up and down the long corridor outside their private apartments, the boy laughing and shouting with glee, and the great, grave President, by sheer will-power, resolutely throwing aside the burdens of his office

in order that his little son might share the joys that are childhood's heritage.

No refreshments were served during the informal evenings spent with Mrs. Lincoln, nor, indeed, were refreshments served at the Thursday evening levees. When ten o'clock came, or perhaps eleven, the ladies would drive home alone, unless their husbands were with them, and the President, which was sometimes the case. And then Mrs. Lincoln would sit down alone and quietly wait until her husband should return from his day's work. In the meantime there were no telegraph wires in the Executive Mansion, and he had to go to the War Building to obtain news at first hand and to consult with the Secretary. Lincoln usually was able to return to his wife, waiting in the living-room for him, by eleven o'clock or a little later, and his wife told her friends he had heard of news from the front. They would discuss the battles, the retreats, the victories, the defeats—all the main developments of the day and evening—with calm thoughtfulness; and although they were generally able to finish this concluding part of their daily program shortly before midnight, yet they would not go to bed when they could do so and retire. As he went upstairs and entered his own room Lincoln's last act was to turn to the guard on duty and say, "Good-night, good-night. Then he would enter his room and close the door, and I—if it was my turn to stand guard—would settle down for eight hours of duty.

## A Premonition of Death

My chair stood in the corridor, within easy reach of the door opening into the President's room, and so situated that I could see every inch of the whole length of the corridor, which was lighted in such a way that no shadows could even partly conceal any one who might try to slip through the corridor. During most of the night I would sit comfortably in the chair, constantly looking this way and that, and listening intently for any unusual noise. Every once in a while, however, I would arise and quietly pace up and down to obtain rest of position. I never read a book or a newspaper, of course, for fear that my attention might become fixed so closely on the printed page that I might not hear or see the approach of assassins whom I always expected at any moment. Needless to say, I never felt any such apprehension to any of the common means of keeping awake during those solitary vigils. The responsibility of guarding Lincoln was so great that doing or saying anything as unthinkably. And when relieved by the day guard at eight o'clock in the morning, I was always so fresh and so awake as when I had gone on duty twelve hours before.

The only time that President Lincoln failed to say good-night to me when we parted, after having been together for the day, was on the evening of the night he attended Ford's Theater, where he was murdered. As I mentioned on another occasion many years ago, Mr. Lincoln had told me that afternoon of a dream that he had had for three consecutive nights, of his assassination. I do not know whether the dread of such an event made me somewhat nervous, and I begged him to stay at the Executive Mansion and not to go to the theater that night. I do not know how to disappoint Mrs. Lincoln or others who were to be present. Then I urged that he allow me to remain on duty and to accompany him; but he would not hear of this, either.

"No, Crook," he said kindly but firmly; "you have had a long day's work already, and must go home to sleep and rest. I cannot afford to have you get all tired out and exhausted."

It was then that I forgot, for the first and only time, to say good-night to me. Instead of doing so he turned, with his kind, grave face, and said:

"Good-by, Crook," and went into his room.

This was the only time he ever said good-by to me. I thought of it at the moment, and, as I have said, I have seen awful news flashed over Washington that he had been shot, his last words were so burned into my mind that they never have been forgotten. I could hardly believe it.

Editor's Note—This is the first of a series of articles by Colonel Creek on the Home Life of our Presidents in the White House. The second will be published in an early number.